

# Under Webster, CIA Regained Luster

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Republicans and Democrats alike praised CIA Director William H. Webster yesterday for bringing integrity to the job and restoring the CIA's image, as he did for the FBI in the post-Watergate era.

For lawmakers such as Sen. David L. Boren (D-Okla.), Webster's biggest accomplishment was the candor and honesty that he brought to the post. Insiders were critical of his grasp of the intricacies of the U.S. intelligence community and his laid-back management style, but he did what few intelligence professionals could have done. When he went to Capitol Hill, lawmakers had no doubt that he was telling them the truth.

"I can't overestimate the importance of it," Boren said. "I could talk to the director of central intelligence and know that he would be absolutely truthful with me. He was so candid that some in the community grumbled from time to time that he'd told us too much. And if he told us something that a day or two later he found out was wrong, he'd call up and say so."

There had been sporadic reports for several years that Webster was about to be replaced, that White House officials were unhappy with him and wanted him to move on. But Webster, a former federal judge who spent 26 years in public service, kept plowing ahead, saying that he had no intention of leaving—until last Thursday when he told President Bush he had decided to move on.

At 67, a friend said, Webster figured that he had only a few more years of marketability as a lawyer. "I still have my roots in the law," he said at a White House news conference yesterday at which Bush an-

nounced the director's resignation. "This gives me an opportunity to pursue other avenues in the private sector."

His tenure as director of central intelligence will be the fourth longest of the 14 who have held that post since it was created in the late 1940s. Webster came to the CIA after serving nine years as director of the FBI.

"He was just what the agency needed," said Rep. Anthony C. Beilenson (D-Calif.), a former chairman of the House Intelligence Committee. His predecessor, the late William J. Casey, "was awfully close-mouthed about things."

Casey's involvement in the Iran-contra scandal and what Boren called "his little private network" with former White House aide Oliver L. North drew even harsher judgments. Webster fired, demoted or reprimanded seven employees for improper behavior and tried to put the scandal behind him with new controls such as a semiannual review of each covert program.

There were criticisms of Webster's tenure mingled with the praise. One official who dealt with Webster described him as "a well-meaning former judge and lawyer coming into a hard-boiled institution. He becomes both dependent on the professionals and he wants to let them think he's one of them."

"He was a man of great integrity," said one congressional staffer, "but he never mastered U.S. intelligence. He didn't understand the [intelligence] budget."

Webster was faulted in some circles for not forcing the CIA's directorate of operations to be more cooperative with other intelligence agencies and, at the same time, for stifling the directorate's initiative by assigning lawyers to CIA stations around the world.

Others said the CIA under Webster took a back seat repeatedly during the recent Persian Gulf War. At one point, the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) asked the CIA to send some people from the intelligence directorate to work with them at the Joint Intelligence Center set up in the Pentagon. The CIA declined.

Under Webster, the CIA took what one government official called "a purist view of intelligence," meaning the agency did not want to get involved in policy discussions as Casey did.

"The problem with this approach when you take it to the extreme," the official said, "is you don't know what the policy-maker is thinking. You don't know how to tailor intelligence so the policy-maker knows which options will work and which ones won't. I'm not talking about skewing intelligence. . . . What I'm talking about is making it relevant."

"He was a transition figure essentially," said Vincent Cannistraro, a senior CIA counterterrorism official until last year. "He was criticized for not being a strategic thinker, but that's not why he was selected. He was selected to calm troubled waters."

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The New York Times \_\_\_\_\_  
The Washington Times \_\_\_\_\_  
The Wall Street Journal \_\_\_\_\_  
The Christian Science Monitor \_\_\_\_\_  
New York Daily News \_\_\_\_\_  
USA Today \_\_\_\_\_  
The Chicago Tribune \_\_\_\_\_

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**DIRECTORS OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE**

**T**here have been 14 directors of central intelligence since 1946. The Central Intelligence Agency was created as a successor to the World War II Office of Strategic Services headed by William J. Donovan.



William H. Webster	May 1987-
William J. Casey	January 1981-January 1987
Stansfield A. Turner	March 1977-January 1981
George Bush	January 1976-January 1977
William E. Colby	September 1973-January 1976
James R. Schlesinger	February 1972-July 1973
Richard M. Helms	June 1966-February 1972
William F. Raborn Jr.	April 1965-June 1966
John A. McCone	November 1961-April 1965
Allen W. Dulles	February 1953-November 1961
Walter Bedell Smith	October 1950-February 1953
Roscoe H. Hillenkoetter	May 1947-October 1950
Hoyt S. Vandenberg	June 1946-May 1947
Sidney W. Souers	January 1946-June 1946

SOURCE: Associated Press

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